

Public Housing and Community Planning Advocacy, 1930s to the 1960s

Dr. Albert Rose

*interviewed by David Hulchanski,
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DH: Dr. Rose, today I'd like to talk about planning and housing, and your involvement in both the 1930s and 1940s. I was wondering, when did you first personally get involved, and at what level?

AR: I got involved in the fall of 1945, when I was still a member of the Canadian Military Intelligence Corps, but had already agreed to accept a position with the Welfare Council of Toronto, now the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, [as] its first director of research. In the course of those discussions and negotiations, it was suggested that I come up to the then School of Social Work, headed by Dr. Harry M. Cassidy. He was a noted Canadian political scientist and expert in the field of social security policy who had been born in Vancouver and lectured at the University of Toronto in the early 1930s in the field of labour problems and socio-economic problems generally and had played a role in the housing movements of those early Depression days.

Cassidy and I agreed that I would accept some part-time teaching duties with the School of Social Work. But, more important to this discussion, he told me he was in the process of securing grants from the federal and provincial governments to begin some research in housing and that he was hiring for that purpose a man who was also still in the armed forces, Humphrey Carver.

So in 1945, before I had been discharged and taken up my position in Toronto, Cassidy called a meeting of those whom he felt would be interested in this ongoing research. I was to be the research director of the Welfare Council, which had representation on his formative advisory committee. At that meeting, he had a number of people from community agencies, some from the Toronto City Council, one or two persons from the province, and Humphrey Carver – whom I had not previously met. Carver was very impressive because of his knowledge of the field, his size, his self-confidence. What we discussed was the kind of research in general that he might be undertaking in the next period of time.

What was also impressive was the fact that Cassidy had also managed to get money from three levels of government, not just two – there was also some money from the city of Toronto. These funds were to support Humphrey Carver as director of a housing research project. I am not certain what the exact title was, but it was something like “Metropolitan Toronto Housing Research Project.” Carver's number-one assistant was to be Robert Adamson, who was an economist and later became the chief economist of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The third person on the team was a lady named Alison Hopwood, who did a great deal of the basic research work and later joined with me, after Carver and Adamson left for Ottawa in the summer of 1948, in our preliminary work on studies of the metropolitan area and its problems, which were submitted to the inquiry led by Lorne Cummings in 1951–52.

DH: *The official work was from the Welfare Council?*

AR: No. I was going to say that this ongoing project in the School of Social Work was one facet of the total operation. The other was an organization that Cassidy had created, along with other people, called the Civic Advisory Council of Toronto. This was to be a quasi-professional citizens' group – really a group of persons who were not ordinary citizens in the neighbourhood sense or in the sense of a ratepayers' association, but a group of professionals in a variety of social sciences and professional fields who would offer their services to the civic government, which meant in those days really the City of Toronto Council. To undertake studies they would require a very modest budget.

They got involved in two or three projects and one of them was a study of the problems of the metropolitan area and its governmental systems, which began in 1949, under the chairmanship of a notable architect planner in those days named P. Alan Deacon. I was Deacon's part-time research assistant. We had a very impressive committee, which met once or twice a month for a period of about three years and issued reports on the metropolitan area of Toronto, which we think from what Cummings told us, had some influence in his analysis of the situation.

[We had] people like Anthony Adamson, who was then teaching Town Planning within the Faculty of Architecture or Department of Architecture at the time. Eric Hardy, who was an emerging consultant in economic, political, and governmental matters, was [also] a member. It was a very impressive experience, which we think contributed to what later became the recommendations of Lorne Cummings and ultimately a metropolitan form of government.

However, I should go back just a bit to indicate that there was a history in this University and in this particular department of the University, implicit within the persons of both Cassidy and Carver, that went back a dozen years or more, specifically to the early thirties when the Depression struck. Cassidy was a young lecturer in what was called the Department of Social Science, which was a sub-section of the department of political economy. It was chaired by a distinguished social philosopher named E. J. Urwick who had come out of the settlement movement in East London and come to Toronto as one of the significant figures in the development of the University settlement. He was more particularly interested in housing and urban conditions. So he had connections both with Cassidy in his own department and Humphrey Carver, who was a lecturer, a young lecturer, recently arrived from Britain in the department of architecture.

So this group were considered to be part of the bright young group of scholars who had some influence in the development of the text called *Social Planning for Canada* issued by the group that seemed to be a part of the brain trust that led to the creation of the CCF party.

That group was very active in Toronto, particularly in the person of these two young people and others who were some of the bright people in political economy as students then and later as faculty people. I am thinking of A.F.W. Plumptre (Wynne Plumptre), who died recently, a man named Joseph F. Parkinson, who later became a significant official in Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation – people of this sort.

In 1934, as you know, there was the famous Lieutenant Governor speech on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the City of Toronto in which he decried the presence of slums. What happened was that Urwick, because of his obvious interest in housing and urban conditions – living conditions – was asked to direct the study that became the Bruce Report. If you look in that, you'll see clearly that while it is known colloquially as the Bruce Report, technically it's the Lieutenant's Governor's committee to study housing conditions in Toronto.

Urwick was the director at the sort of senior-committee level and the people who were directing the research work (such as it was) were first Cassidy, who left in 1934 to become the first director of Public Welfare in any province in Canada, namely in his home province British Columbia. He was succeeded by Plumptre and Plumptre finished that document. So there was a history in the University and in this department, there were other people involved, because they were involved in the University settlement. For instance, a biochemist named Coventry, and another scientist named Wasteneys – these were people who devoted their leisure time to helping the University settlement, which was right in the Urban Centre and the Immigrant Reception Centre. So all of these things fit together in a kind of a not-very-neat way, but there was a linkage between a group of people and a group of activities that occurred.

Now when I finally arrived in Toronto as of December, January, end of 1945 and beginning of '46, I began to assume my duties at the Welfare Council. I learned that there was an important citizens' movement here headed by W. Harold Clark, who is still alive and is certainly worthy of an interview. Clark also by the way wrote a long analysis of the first 25 years or so of the Community Planning Association of Canada. He was its first national president, I believe, or at the very least its second. This organization was called the Citizens Housing and Planning Association and I learned that it had been active since about 1942. With the help of a new person on the scene, now in his eighties, known as Eugene Faludi, [it] planned a public exhibition of what the future, postwar Toronto might look like. This was held in the lobby of Eaton's Auditorium.

Apparently – I was not here at the time – apparently it attracted a tremendous number of visitors, a couple of hundred thousand, which in a population of perhaps six to seven hundred thousand was considered very significant. They felt that they had induced a great deal of interest in planning and the shape of the city in the postwar period – and right in the middle of the war, when people were pretty depressed and there was no indication that we were going to come out in any shape to implement any of these plans.

This Citizens Housing and Planning Association was again an interesting body, because it was representative of other groups. It had a council of about 25 or 30 people. Each person represented dozens of other groups and perhaps hundreds of members in the background, such as the representative from the Home and School Association who obviously spoke for dozens of Home and School Associations across the city and literally hundreds or thousands of members. Each person was in that sort of position; they were the representatives of groups. The total membership of the CHPA was never more than about 300 who paid a dollar a piece. The organization clearly did not have a big budget. What it specialized in was firing off letters of opinion, exhortations, developing statements on housing and planning issues.

It played a very significant role in the initiation of the Regent Park Housing Project because it, under the direction of a professor Stuart Jaffary here, who died a few years ago, and whose son is Karl Jaffary, who later became an important figure in Toronto City Council. Stuart Jaffary was the one who read the brief of the Citizens Housing and Planning Association to the mayor and council of the City of Toronto in the fall of 1946. It was at that point that the mayor agreed right then and there, after the discussion, that he would put this matter on the ballot. That was the vote that was first taken on January 1, 1947, with respect to Regent Park. It resulted in a favourable vote and thus that project.

At the same time, the people who were working as advisors to Cassidy on the housing project that he had within this department under federal, provincial, and local auspices, the people who were interested in the Citizens Housing and Planning Association, and the people who were also serving the Canadian Welfare Council as volunteers in the development of what became a National Housing Policy for Canada issued in 1947 were very often the same people. There was a

great deal of overlap. The 1947 group, I think, included Humphrey Carver, either as chairman or certainly the author of the drafts of the document. I sat on that committee from my Welfare Council base, Harold Clark sat on the committee, and so on.

In the next several years, into the early 1950s, in addition to the work on the metropolitan area, I think the main concern was whether they could create a Federation of Citizens Groups in Housing, like the one in Toronto, across the country, nationally. There were meetings from time to time from people from Nova Scotia. I remember a Dr. Prince, a sociologist who was then certainly well past middle age who taught in one of the universities, I don't recall which, in Nova Scotia. There were people from the west, certainly from British Columbia, because there was a strong Vancouver Housing Association that also dates back into the 1930s and had a considerable influence in the postwar period on what happened in Vancouver.

This group was also – all these groups sort of together and apart were also – pressing for federal and provincial participation in the development of low-cost rental housing programs (which were not available, as you know) in the manner in which the British, the Scandinavians, the Netherlands, and even the United States had developed legislation permitting what we call public housing or low-cost rental housing. I object, by the way, to [the term] “low-cost housing.” It has never been low-cost in the sense of cheapness or poor quality or at least not by design.

The whole notion that was being debated was society's responsibility to low-income groups and the extent to which it was feasible both economically and morally. The moral element played a large part in those days. Whether it was morally – ethically, if you will – permissible or acceptable to subsidize the shelter costs of certain groups in the population. Strangely enough, the lines were very sharply divided. It wasn't the case of citizens versus politicians. There were many people in the community, not just businessmen or well-to-do people, but people in religious organizations, people in unions, who did not favour this kind of program.

Well, I think the Citizens Housing and Planning Association under Clark and of course the Welfare Council statement on National Housing Policy and various other groups in the country had a lot of influence in persuading the federal government to bring in the amendments of November 1949 that created the federal-provincial partnership. But by this time, Carver and Adamson had finished their work in Toronto and had both – you get this in Carver's book *Compassionate Landscape* – had both accepted David Mansur's invitation to join the staff of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Adamson went into the economics department, which was his background, and Carver became ultimately the chairman of a think tank to help develop policy in housing.

Now they left here in the summer of 1948 and the amendments I am talking about were enacted at the end of November 1949. So it's clear they must have had some influence on the Minister, who was Robert Winters, and indicated in those days that he travelled from coast-to-coast to interview all of the premiers. Newfoundland was not yet in the Federation, so, yes, it was in 1949. He had an understanding that they were willing to go into what we would call today a cost-sharing program. Well, the details of that you don't need, because obviously you can look up the amendments to the *National Housing Act*.

But the significant thing was that these groups did have an influence, and strangely enough, they were asking for certain things that didn't appear in legislation by name but were there by some other name. For instance, they were asking for subsidies for shelter payments for low-income families. There wasn't as much emphasis as there is today on individuals or senior citizens. They emphasized terms like “slum clearance” so that the Act, when amended, provided for all of these things but didn't necessarily refer to them in the same terms. The act doesn't mention “subsidies,” it mentions “losses,” it mentions “sharing of capital expenditures and losses.” It also mentions, as you know, houses for sale, which were never built under the federal-

provincial partnership and probably are the germ of an idea that became AHOP twenty years later.

When we move into the 1950s, all these groups were interested to see what was going to happen. It could have been nothing, since it was left to provincial and local initiatives to take advantages of the federal – what will we say? – “carrots,” the federal opportunities. Expectation ranged all the way from a great deal was going to happen to absolutely nothing was going to happen. Then, of course, what really happened was something in between those extremes.

That’s why I recall Newfoundland was in the federation, because Newfoundland sort of took off from the barrier most at the very beginning and began to redevelop some of the centre of St. John’s. [Newfoundland] built public housing, and soon also was a leader in another curious way, in that it built public housing, not only subsidized at low rental for low-income families but a second level of public housing which was known as “full-recovery housing” – not at market rents but economic rent. They evolved and knew that people would graduate from one level to another, which I don’t think had been thought about particularly. Certainly I don’t recall anybody else mentioning this in any serious way as a piece of theory. Newfoundland really did quite a lot when you consider its population is something like 400,000.

Nova Scotia was active particularly. There was a little bit of work in Saint John. [Toronto] Ontario, and Vancouver, B.C., were the major cites. There was a little bit of activity in Saskatchewan. Alberta was completely out of this program, wasn’t interested. Manitoba was not enthusiastic particularly, and P.E.I. didn’t seem to have the problem. So this program really did a great deal more than people anticipated. I think it influenced the new metropolitan chairman, along with David Mansur, who left the presidency in 1954 of Central Mortgage after eight or nine years and came to Toronto. The two of them really created the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority. That, of course, was five years after the authorities in Halifax, St. John’s, Vancouver, and so on. He had therefore a very unique opportunity.

I sat on that Housing Authority for the next nine years under Mansur’s chairmanship and other persons of note, including the Commissioner of Finance for Metropolitan Toronto, who was Arthur Lascelles, and so on. That authority was responsible for Regent Park South, Lawrence Heights, Scarlett Woods, and was part way into the creation of Warden Woods when it was incorporated into the Ontario Housing Corporation in 1964.

These things, I think, all sort of follow in some sort of logical sequence, unless I am trying to take a lot of disparate activities and put them together. Now, in the middle of the 1950s, the activities that had not been successful in creating a National Organization of Public Housing Tenants Association – not Tenants Associations, Citizens Associations or Housing and Planning Associations, which is more like it – did reach fulfillment in the creation of the Community Planning Association of Canada. Now that was purely and simply the creation of the same groups of people who felt that citizens’ organizations such as the one in Vancouver and the one in Toronto could never get the resources to build a national group that would manage to get together from time to time, put pressure on government, coordinate their activities and the like, in addition to pressing their own provincial governments or local governments for action.

Now there is no question in my mind that Carver (and I think he says this in his most recent book) played an important role in the creation of the Community Planning Association. For one thing, they needed to be funded, and under Part Five of the National Housing Act, where his influence was most significant, the CPAC was funded. It was largely funded by federal government with minor contributions from the provincial governments over the next 20 years. It was always in financial problems. It was always a question of whether the CMHC would continue its funding. Carver sat on the early executives and then later represented the corporation when it became more of a body representing different aspects of the society, that is federal

representatives, provincial representatives, municipal representatives and citizens generally. At first, it was basically citizens generally and he was there really as the government advisor, because that's where the money came from. So we set up a national office and we converted or began to convert the local groups into regional or local branches. Now in Toronto, that wasn't very difficult, because the Citizen's Housing and Planning Association had pretty well evaporated.

DH: Around what time was that?

AR: Well, this would be by the end of the first half of the 1950s, because the CPAC formally dates from about 1955–56. We had created an organization that sort of carried on into the early 1950s, the roots of which were in the Citizen's Housing and Planning Association of the 1940s, and we did manage to have a staff person. We had Paul Ringer and then we had Bill Dempsey, both of whom were graduates of this department. Ringer is now in the development department as director of community development. Dempsey was in the department of planning and development of the province for a great many years after graduating here in 1947 and now is Executive Assistant to the director of education of North York.

We also graduated from the attempt to combine a program in Planning and Social Work. John F. Brown, about 1952, is director of Community Redevelopment (or whatever the proper title is) in the Ministry of Housing now and has been his entire career in that aspect, first in Municipal Affairs, and then later Antigua, and now in the Ministry of Housing. The third person in our attempts to create some personnel – and I should move into that field now – was a man named George Muirhead, who is now the city planner for Kingston, Ontario.

That was an interesting effort, but I only mention that in passing, because I think that all of us directed our attention to three things. One was the development of professional personnel – not in order of importance necessarily. A second was to continue to push governments in the field of housing. Third was to create or improve planning legislation, and that, of course, got us as citizens' organizations into contact with other aspects of government.

My early recollection is that from the early postwar period on, the Citizens' Organization in Toronto had regular meetings with officials in the Department of Planning and Development of the province, which was a relatively new department. The *Planning Act* was passed in 1946, but there had been some earlier legislation, I believe in 1942, because there was the city of Toronto Planning Board from that date.

Again, many of the same people. Sometimes there'd be an add-on if the subject were intensely physical planning, some people would join the delegation who might not be there if we were talking to the city about its Regent Park project and how it should develop and what some of its policy should be and particularly the creation of its Housing Authority.

This (by the way, as an aside) was one of the contributions which Carver, Adamson, and Hopwood made from the university setting. They wrote significant documents on a rent scale for Regent Park, which ultimately was the basis for the federal-provincial public housing rent scale. They wrote an important pamphlet on the important composition of the Housing Authority of Toronto, which hadn't been yet composed and which the city basically ignored by appointing politicians and others who were to receive remuneration which later was quite antagonistic to the policy of the federal government. They wrote other material about the housing problems of metropolitan Toronto, which led to Carver's first book called *Housing for Canadians*.

But the reports and pamphlets and studies in those years 1946–48 had an important influence. Now again, many of the same people, like P. Alan Deacon, who later chaired that committee on metropolitan problems, he and Faludi and a man named John Layng were the notable architect planners of the period, long before there was a significant planning consultation core in this community. They were working at many things simultaneously in these annual or semi-annual meetings with the Minister of Planning and Development. The emphasis was the legislation and how it should be amended, and things that people were noticing that they felt should be drawn to the attention of the Minister, and the Deputy Minister, whose name was Arthur Bunnell.

The thing that impressed me was that I came to realize that in a complicated field like this, a citizens' organization per se, well-intended people without professional advice really could get nowhere. They could make motherhood statements and they could insist on planning and insist on desirability of improved housing for low-income families and this, that, and the other thing, but they really couldn't influence government or certainly changes in legislation, not in those days.

Well, that was one thrust: the attempt to influence planning legislation, amend it, and so on. At the same time, they were pushing the federal government and the same department in Queen's Park to improve its housing program. I mention that specifically, because in planning and development, there was a community planning branch. There was also a housing branch. The activities of the province in housing, such as they were, were all encompassed within the same Ministry and these branches were relatively small with modest start-ups, very often drawn from people who had worked for Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which had been in existence for a number of years by this time. Some of the people who worked in those areas are still or had significant careers later in Provincial Housing Corporations, such as Bob Sutters, who worked for the housing branch and later became the first executive director or managing director of the Ontario Housing Corporation.

So we come to a situation in the middle 1950s... [words missing] Fred Gardiner was chairman of Metro Toronto Housing Authority and this was a very significant development, because nowhere in the continent as far as I knew had a Housing Authority or Redevelopment Authority or whatever its name was, which could go beyond the boundaries of the central city.

DH: Beyond the boundaries?

AR: That meant that Gardiner himself had to be convinced of the worthwhile nature of the program, which I think was Mansur's great contribution in convincing him. And then, of course, they had in turn to convince the councils of the twelve suburban municipalities that this was something in which they should participate. They had to agree obviously through the federal-provincial activity, and there were tremendous fights and squabbles... For a long time all of these things came together and they pushed a great deal in the 1930s, as you know – the series of reports and city council documents and so on. But there wasn't any money and there wasn't any legislation in any event.

DH: But that's what strikes me if you compare Canada to the United States: just a great burst of activity in the 1930s, tremendous, even the building of the greenbelt towns. The government built three entire little towns and in effect turned control over to the people through Municipal Council after building them.

AR: Yes.

DH: In Canada, in planning and in housing, there's always been this active core of people you've been talking about concerned with conditions and all that, but almost no activity. In fact, Bennett's New Deal or whatever, came the year before the election. He sort of saw the light – too late maybe. As you know from the figures, the 1935 and 1938 Housing Acts had an impact, but minor in terms of numbers. Not very much was being done.

AR: Well, I think that the main point that you are making is there is not really a sound comparison between the New Deal under a Democratic government, which got into power after 12 years. From 1920 to 1932, they were out of power. Then you had Roosevelt, who was of international stature, who captured the imagination of people. Here we had the Conservative Party in power for the first time in a long time and Conservative meant conservative.

DH: Yes.

AR: It meant low public expenditures. There was no great vast outpouring of money here to help the poor or the unemployed. Roosevelt engaged a social worker named Harry Hopkins, whose name is famous, and if you read the book by [Robert] Sherwood called *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, [he] was dispensing money like dishwater in a day or so of his appointment. You had a whole new group which formed around Roosevelt who were what we would call today left-wing thinkers.

DH: [Rexford] Tugwell.

AR: Yes, Tugwell and I think [Lewis] Mumford had some influence – or maybe his came a little bit later. You had Hopkins, you had Harold Ickes, you had people who were adventurous in what Canada would have been considered anti-free-enterprise activities. You certainly didn't really move very far from sort of a free enterprise, sit-it-out and wait-it-out in the period 1930–35, which is one reason, of course, why the Conservative government went right out of power after five years. They did not tackle the thing with the kind of fervour and imagination that the Americans did.

Now the *Housing Act* in the States came in in 1937 and we had one in 1938. But before that, what they had, which we didn't have, were activities under the Public Works Administration, which was Ickes's, and the Works Progress Administration, which was really a relief operation. Largely, Public Works was building public building and some housing and schools and that sort of thing. Now that was one side of the operation, which was more traditional. But the WPA – and we had nothing like that – the Works Progress Administration, that was a social welfare operation, largely influenced by Hopkins and others, where they had people doing make-work projects. They were supporting artists, supporting drama groups. They were doing things that we discovered in the 1960s and 1970s under such terms as LIP [Local Initiatives Projects] and so on.

DH: CYC [Company of Young Canadians].

AR: So I think you have to say that they were a long way ahead of us, and yet, in the pure public housing operation, the 1937 *Act* is barely in the States. It barely got started before they got into war and you don't really see much of what we would consider to be public housing in the traditional sense, in the British Council housing sense in the States until after World War II.

DH: But there was some.

AR: There was some.

DH: So big that the number of units was impressive, although it is a big country.

AR: That's right. You are dealing with 130 million people even then. But what they had were these – what will we say? – non-permanent agencies, which sprang up as a part of the New Deal that we did not duplicate here, we did not.

DH: Well, there was the problem of provincial-dominion relations.

AR: Yes, right. I suppose what we are saying is that while there were citizens' movements in both countries, the key factor was a different attitude in government. The state governments were relatively weak and willing to accept a lot of these operations with more or less good grades, including the *Social Security Act* of 1935. Whereas we had nothing like this, you see. We got unemployment insurance in 1940, which was really the first major social welfare measure, and by that time we were already at war and full employment had pretty well replaced unemployment.

DH: Yes. That to me is a bit of a paradox, to explain big differences. Certainly the government philosophy is key, but then it seems to me things have to go beyond that too, and [consider] the conditions. In the United States, when Roosevelt took over, the banks were closed, they had a bank holiday. The economy had sort of ceased to function.

AR: Our banks didn't close but—

DH: There's a different banking structure here.

AR: We weren't functioning very well.

DH: Yes.

AR: We didn't have a labour force unemployment rate of more than 20%. We had all kinds of distress from coast to coast, but somehow or other as a nation, our economic and social philosophy lies somewhere between the British and American. We sort of rejected the fact that the British had gone into many housing, planning, and social welfare measures for perhaps 40 years. We rejected the American sort of experiments and really turned our nose up at what seemed to be a lot of hoopla and a lot of jazzing up the attack upon the Depression and really sat there and did nothing.

DH: Yes, same as in the field of planning: very active right from 1910, continual advocacy in planning legislation, and in connection with housing and that, and there's Thomas Adams, and yet very little happening.

AR: I think some people have said that there is a timeline between Canadian and American activity and the only exception to that would be Family Allowance, which the Americans hadn't adopted. We seem to be about a half a generation behind in these aspects, certainly in housing and planning. I agree with you, there are exceptions in the health and welfare services.

DH: That certainly.

AR: Partly related to their emphasis on free enterprise.

DH: Before we leave the 1930s, have you ever heard of the Ontario Planning and Housing Association in the 1920s?

AR: No.

DH: I read a reference to it. It recommended housing and planning reform, and in the 1930s, Toronto finally established a city planning board of several members and then a city planning department with Tracey LeMay as the head, although I've lost track as to what happened to it. It obviously did not exist coming into the 1940s.

AR: Well, the board you refer to must have been informal, because it's usually said that 1942 is the [creation of] the City of Toronto Planning Board per se.

DH: Yes, so it existed for a few years and it was a creation of the city itself. There was no provincial legislation to allow for that; it was purely advisory.

AR: That's right.

DH: Okay, so we then head towards the 1940s. Conditions are getting better by the time war breaks out, and then with the start of the war is a great boom – industrial production, war production, and all that – and so the problem is no longer unemployment, it's the problem of not having enough people. Too many people are now being congested in the cities to work in war production and so on. So to me it appears – and correct me if I am wrong – there is quite a turnaround. Instead of just having independent citizens advocating reforms, as you had in the 1930s, they were still doing that, but now you had the government and really all those were concerned with what's called postwar reconstruction, which began very early. In 1941 the Canadian government advisory committee and postwar reconstruction was established.

AR: That's right.

DH: With a sub-committee (one of eight sub-committees) being the sub-committee on housing and community planning.

AR: I hadn't mentioned that before, which was the so-called Curtis report, after C.A. Curtis of Queen's. That's right.

DH: So it developed a problem that I have with this further. A great burst of government activity, some very good reports issued by government, not just by citizens now, unofficial reports, the government reports through the 1940s and then it appears quite a letdown after the war. A lot of talk and a lot of hoopla from the government in these different reports, both in planning and housing at each level. The City of Toronto had its own – what was it called? – reconstruction committee of sorts, the Toronto Reconstruction Council of 1943. The Ontario government had theirs; the Tories when they first came in in 1943 had a 12-point program, some of which hasn't been implemented, yet are very progressive social reforms. After the war, yes, CMHC, the 1944 National Housing Act and so on, but we just talked about what still needed to be done and how little actually was done despite great efforts from the private sector, from citizens. So have you had any explanation or thoughts on the rising tide and apparent decline and lack of implementation?

AR: Well I have thoughts, but not necessarily full explanations, and I think you have drawn some of these things to my attention. What you call a tremendous burst of activity – I wouldn't go that far. I think there was a great deal more interest and there was a willingness to a point, as there always seems to be at federal level and in most provinces today: commissions of investigation, royal commissions, committees concerned with the future and the like. That doesn't guarantee that there is going to be any implementation or activity. What I think we faced was this, that during the war, the federal government had powers that were willingly granted to it.

DH: The War Measures Act.

AR: Yes, which got it directly into a certain amount of housing activity. As you know, the Ministry of Finance was involved in buying older places and renovating them in Ottawa and other places because it wanted to house some key personnel. The government was inducing people to come to the larger cities and work in war industry. So they got into a program which was federal-municipal, which was called Wartime Housing Limited.

When the war comes to an end, the federal government is left with the fact that constitutionally the responsibility [for housing] is provincial. It has a new act and a new corporation, which is to encourage the whole business of housing, not just low-cost rental housing. It carries on with successors to the Wartime Housing Limited for a bit, called War Veterans Housing, which it could do under its responsibility towards veterans, again with the concurrence of local governments, in whose jurisdiction obviously the land was found. But I think they came to realize that unless they got the provinces in a position where they were willing to get involved in federal-provincial programs, it wasn't going to go ahead very far.

It was the beginning of a time when I think the provinces, while not strong, were beginning to [exercise] their responsibilities in education (as the birth rate increased), and in social welfare (as the first sort of postwar burst of employment began to taper off by about 1949 which was again rescued by the Korean war for about four years, five years). I think [the federal government] had a feeling that from that time on, they really had to have provincial concurrence to get some of these programs moving. Now perhaps it was the early influence of Quebec, I am not sure. As I say, these are some thoughts but not necessarily an explanation.

But there is no question – and I mentioned this earlier – that Robert Winters spoke to all of the provincial governments before he brought in the amendments which are the beginning of a public housing program in this country, in the usual sense in which we understand that term. Now that wasn't true previously, but it may have been that the provincial governments made it clear that the federal-municipal arrangement was no longer acceptable. That was fine during a wartime period of emergency. So I am pretty certain that these various organizations we were talking about earlier, these citizens' groups, these community planning and housing organizations, CPAC as it emerged, realized that they had to push provincial governments to get into the position of assuming their responsibilities. To me that is what the 1964 amendments are all about. It made it much more attractive to the provincial government to exercise their responsibilities, they put in very little of the capital.

DH: 90:10?

AR: 90:10 instead of 75:25. They had to put in more of the subsidy, but at the end of the period, they owned it rather than a federal-provincial partnership owning it. Now all of these carrots led to a big outburst. The outburst that you are looking for in activity really occurred from about 1967–72 in most of the provinces, particularly in Ontario.

DH: Are you referring to public housing?

AR: Yes, particularly, and what I am feeling very strongly at the moment is that it was necessary to realize that the organization with a constitutional responsibility had to be pushed to exercise those responsibilities. It didn't have to be pushed in education because there were the children and there were the newcomers and there were the hundreds of thousands of people that had to be educated and the law said so. But there was nothing really on the books that said the Province of Ontario or Manitoba had to do anything particularly about the housing and environmental conditions in which their people lived. However, there was an area in-between, which we will call loosely "social welfare," where they had the Depression experience. They had the new legislation, unemployment insurance, family allowances. They all had welfare departments by this time.

The provinces, I think, felt that among the three priorities – education, social welfare and housing – the third one I mentioned was really further down the list. These weren't their only responsibilities; they were also responsible for transportation, responsible for labour relations, which was a very big issue, and of course responsible for urban affairs. Whether you encompass that within the term "urban planning" or define it more broadly, that I think meant that by the middle 1950s, all of the federal-provincial relationships became a much more significant aspect of Canadian history. That is, everything from then on was going to be negotiated. You had, for example, two provinces with hospital insurance programs, B.C. and Saskatchewan, entirely on their own. But by 1958–59 you had a national scheme in which the federal government offered a 50% share to all the provinces.

DH: 1958, 1959?

AR: I think it was 1959 by the time this came in. In 1958, Diefenbaker's government passed the first legislation that enabled the federal government to contribute toward the basic welfare costs of provincial and local governments. They had not been responsible under the Constitution and were not, so again they offered money under certain conditions, which later became the *Canada Assistance Act* and the Canada Assistance Plan of 1966 and is now in the process of revision 10 or 12 years later.

I think that the provinces gradually assumed greater strength in the 1950s. They grew in population, they grew in income. Quebec particularly became much stronger under Duplessis, who died about 1959–60 and to me they were moving politically in a position that the American states were not moving. The American states still seem to be much less significant than the federal government in Washington. Here right now I think it's a moot question as to which are the most important levels of government.

DH: Well, there is a constitutional difference that the feds and states are very strong.

AR: Now those would be my thoughts: that if the federal government (as I am guessing) realized this by the 1950s, federal activity had to taper off until the provinces came forward with their legislation. With their initiation, and we know now in hindsight, from 1950–64, all of this added up to not very much, not really very much. Hence the amendments that said, "We will encourage much larger grants to provincial housing organizations and/or local ones." In Ontario the government seized the opportunity – namely the Minister, Mr. Randall, and the new head of the housing branch, Robert Sutters – to create a corporation and sort of grab the ball as it were and

run with it before the cities particularly became the significant recipients of these new opportunities. What they were really saying also was that none of these cities – Windsor, Hamilton, Toronto – will get involved in a federal relationship without our concurrence and without recognizing this is a middle level of government and we must remind you again that you exist because of us, the provinces. I think that's a fair picture of what was happening.

DH: Another slightly different thing.

AR: Yes?

DH: It appears to me in the literature of the 1930s, especially the 1940s, you always have housing and town planning lumped together and people talking about them lumped together. Planning seemed to sort of be tacked on, and in the context of housing it simply appeared that we wanted the government to build housing, and of course we want them to build it in an orderly way. What is your feeling for what the term "planning" meant, say during the 1940s? What did people who weren't necessarily planners but were always on about housing and planning, what did they view "planning" to be or to mean?

AR: Well, I think we have to remind ourselves first of all that the most active proponents of governmental activity in these fields were people who came from charitable and social organizations. They were mainly concerned with the housing of people and planning was something else. You didn't have professional planners as we said earlier. You had a few architects who acted as planning consultants. I think that the organizations gradually came to understand planning as concerned with physical rather than social matters. There was a clear separation, and what that meant was you were going to have urban growth in first instance, particularly on the periphery and in these new suburbs, and there had to be professional competence directing this growth so that it would be attractive, environmentally sound, that residential areas would be clearly distinguished from industrial areas, from commercial areas, from recreational areas. So what they called "subdivision planning" became I think at first the main piece of understanding of what planning meant to most people.

Then it was conceived as the notion of zoning, which was hard for people to understand. It became rather clear because as they saw brand-new tracts or subdivisions on the ground and they expected the designs of subdivisions not to resemble what they saw in the central city, that is, to be pure rectangular outfits. They had more attractive ideas in mind from an aesthetic point of view, but also the separation of functions, which they regarded as important, and which they felt was a great disadvantage to the central cities, the mix up land uses.

They began to translate this back into the urban centre. They knew that the owner of a piece of land could not necessarily do everything he or she wanted to do with that piece of land. They began to worry I think about the areas in which they lived. People who lived in what we think of and then label "residential areas" became concerned about the possibility that they could be invaded by what we would today call developers – entrepreneurs who might decide that it was more profitable to have duplexes and quadplexes, long before the days of the apartment building. I think they began to demand of local government a concern with this concept of zoning.

There was certainly a lot of interest and activity in the 1950s, as I recall it with the city of Toronto zoning bylaw. The new suburban areas which were beginning to hire planners, developed so-called official plans. Faludi had developed one in Etobicoke, I think either just after—

DH: 1946?

AR: Yes, just after World War II. I think that politicians and leading residents if you will (people who had some influence and were concerned about what was happening) saw planning also as zoning, encompassed within the understanding of planning, subdivision control, zoning, and then, since they were in their housing thinking, concerned about something called “slum clearance.” They could see the necessity of planning redeveloped housing communities, because they were to be entirely housing. They could also see that it was important for the built-up city to distinguish clearly what was going to happen in certain areas.

This progress from slum clearance to urban redevelopment to urban renewal – I think people began to understand (or some people began to understand) that because an area was residential, it wasn’t written somewhere in the laws of the Medes and the Persians that it had to be cleared and also be residential. It might be right smack up against the railway tracks or in the middle of some industrial development which had the right to be there and that perhaps you should clear certain areas, which were residential, move people to a more desirable site and rebuild those areas as commercial or light industrial or something of the sort. Now I think this was a greater understanding of planning, namely if you will, the planning of redevelopment or renewal.

DH: The key element of planning in the 1950s.

AR: Now within this, of course, you always had overhanging or undergirding everything, the concern with transportation. The metropolitan area moved from 700,000 to a million to 1.25 million to 1.5 million, and you had people coming into the downtown area or into the city proper from the suburbs and they in people’s minds were just about as far away if you think of, say, Yonge and Sheppard or Yonge and Finch as the commuters today who may come down from Newmarket or Barrie or Guelph or whatever. The distances seem to be as great. First of all, the transportation arteries were not as wide, the expressways were not built, cars were just as numerous considering the capacity of the channels on which they developed. You didn’t have the public transit system; the subway system began in 1953, I think, when the Yonge Street line was opened.

I think those people saw that there had to be planners who were concerned with the movement of people in and out of the city, which basically is transportation. I think people began to ask – after all, that exhibition we mentioned earlier was back in 1942 or 1943 or in that general period, certainly before the end of the war – I think people began to ask these philosophical questions. What sort of a city do we want? What alternatives are there? Are we going to be another New York or Los Angeles?

Certainly, when I began to appear for the Ontario Municipal Board for one reason or another, I remember the chairman at one point saying, because I was arguing that a particular development seemed to be appropriate in a particular place, an inner suburb, that I was

advocating, he said, Manhattan or Los Angeles rather than a particular form for Toronto. So to me that was an indication that people had picked up some view of metropolitan areas that was not the view they wanted. I think there became a great acceptance of or substantial acceptance of planning, which was reinforced by the group that began to form in the late 1960s and called itself Civic Action and later led to the reform wing.

These people felt by that time – of course we skipped all the discussion of the apartment boom and developers influence and so on, which I think you, understand very well – but the significance of the reform group (so-called from my point of view) was that they argued that cities which focused on growth would accept almost anything – any proposal by any developer, any use of land that seemed to promise growth or housing for some part of the market – and that this was wrong. It was partly wrong because the politicians were not buying the philosophy of Ontario's development of those agencies, the planning agency, the housing agency, the redevelopment agency, whatever they were called, the authorities, the boards. Our philosophy in this province was that it was a good responsibility for laypeople who were so-called public-spirited citizens with something to contribute.

One of the things you may remember that the reform group did was to insist that there be more political representation on the planning board and also that certain groups were not represented. Higher-income groups were represented and lower-income groups were not. Cynically, I felt very often that this simply meant the replacement of some businessman by somebody in somebody's ward who was active in the campaign and was a single mother or something of the sort, although I didn't mind her getting two or three thousand dollars as an honorarium.

By the way, I forgot to mention that Harold Clark was also the chairman of the city planning board in Lawson's day and that would be interesting to you.

DH: Yes.

AR: Now in his day, all those people were not paid, they didn't even get their parking paid, and we come to a new era where the so called reform group is saying this should be a very different kind of an organization and probably should be a department of civil government rather than under a lay board. But in addition, these people should have an honorarium for their services, which was unheard-of in the Housing Authorities. For the first five or six years of the Provincial Housing Corporations, nobody was paid a nickel. They were lucky to get their lunch, and so the philosophy has changed again you see, from a group of public-spirited citizens, to – well who would these people be? The politicians would know the retired presidents of companies of banks, of real estate organizations, of insurance organizations, and they were concerned about representation by veterans in the first 10 or 15 years after the war. And then, of course, there had to be somebody engaged in voluntary work who would combine both charitable impulse and the female component.

That's the way they thought of planning boards and housing authorities and the like. Now this has changed – I don't say it has changed all over the province, but certainly in Toronto and probably in Ottawa, Hamilton, and Windsor, it has changed. The view is that it should be more politically controlled, it should have a wider representation from the income groups in the community and that these people should be paid for their efforts. I don't know what payment has to do with it particularly, except that if you expect to induce people who have very little income to begin with, you have got to give them some compensation for their time and effort. The idea of having a retired banker was that he didn't need any money.